ISSN 0712-7774

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM PRESENTS

CEREBUS

53
AUG

THE COUNTESS & THE AARDVARK

$1.60
$1.40 in USA

A Note from the Publisher

This past month has been a difficult one for both Dave and I. While Dave took off to a very very busy two-week tour across Canada, I stayed home to keep the organization rolling. Midway through the tour, Dave did a signing in Toronto's Silver Snail. Being that close to home meant he could take a day off, but we quickly found that time off being swallowed up by more interviews and some rather exhasting drives back and forth between Kitchener and Toronto.

One week later, I took the train up to Ottawa, to end the tour off with Dave at MapleCon 5. It was alot of fun, with plenty of really nice people and a chance to talk to the fans about what they like and dislike in comics.

One of the big surprises for me was the good attendance for a panel I was on that concerned the business end of doing comics. With me was Bill Marks (Vortex), Sal Amendola (DC), and Jim Shooter. I must admit I hadn't had much of a chance to get to know Jim before, but I was glad this opportunity came up. We sat and talked after the panel about all the changes going on in comics. You know, sometimes I feel a little out-numbered when I'm sitting with artists and writers. It's reassuring to see that the fans are beginning to understand that comics is both an art **and** business. It never hurts to have someone with Jim's experience with whom I can exchange ideas and impressions.

Going on to a totally different subject, I'd like to straighten out some of the confusion I've seen in the mail. It seems that alot of people aren't sure what you get when you order a limited edition colour portfolio. For those of you who are considering it, we have sold half of the run of 100, so you should order soon. For your $100.00 you get the colour portfolio **PLUS** a piece of Dave Sim original artwork. This is not to be confused with the original artwork that we sell (which are the pages from the book). These are drawings (not sketches) done individually for you. They are numbered and signed, and we ask that you specify whether you want Cerebus the Barbarian or a High Society Cerebus. These drawings take time, so if you are one of those people who ordered one and haven't seen it in the mail, please be patient. Believe me, it will be worth the wait. But then, anything good usually is.

By the time you have read this, I will have gone to Houston's Comix Fair and the San Diego Comic Con. I hope that if you saw me you came by to say "hi"! Anytime I'm at a Con, I'm there for one reason, to see people. So don't be shy, come by and let me know you're there. I'll tell you all about San Diego next month.

For now, sit back and enjoy this issue. the Countess is running a close second to Jaka as my favorite female character in Cerebus. Read on and see why!

See you next month.

Deni

CEREBUS

VOL. NO. 53 AUGUST 1983

Publisher: Deni Sim

Assistant to the Publisher: Karen McKiel

Circulation 18,000

Distributors:
Bud Plant Inc.
P.O. Box 1886
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Glenwood Distribution
124 Vandalia St.
Collinsville, IL 62234

Capital City Distributors
2827 Perry Street
Madison, WI 53713

Diamond Comics Distributors Inc.
1720 Belmont Ave.
Bay B - 2
Baltimore, MD 21207

Longhorn Books
9200 Chancellor Row
Dallas, TX 75247

Styx Comic Service
Box 3791, Stn. B
Winnipeg, Man., Canada
R2W 3R6

Now & Then Books
90 Queen St. South
Kitchener, Ontario, Canada
N2G 1V9

Andromeda Publications
367 Queen St. W.
Toronto, Ontario, Canada
M5V 2A4

Titan Distributors
P.O. Box 250
London, E3 4RT England

These issues are available wholesale & single copies from the above distributors.

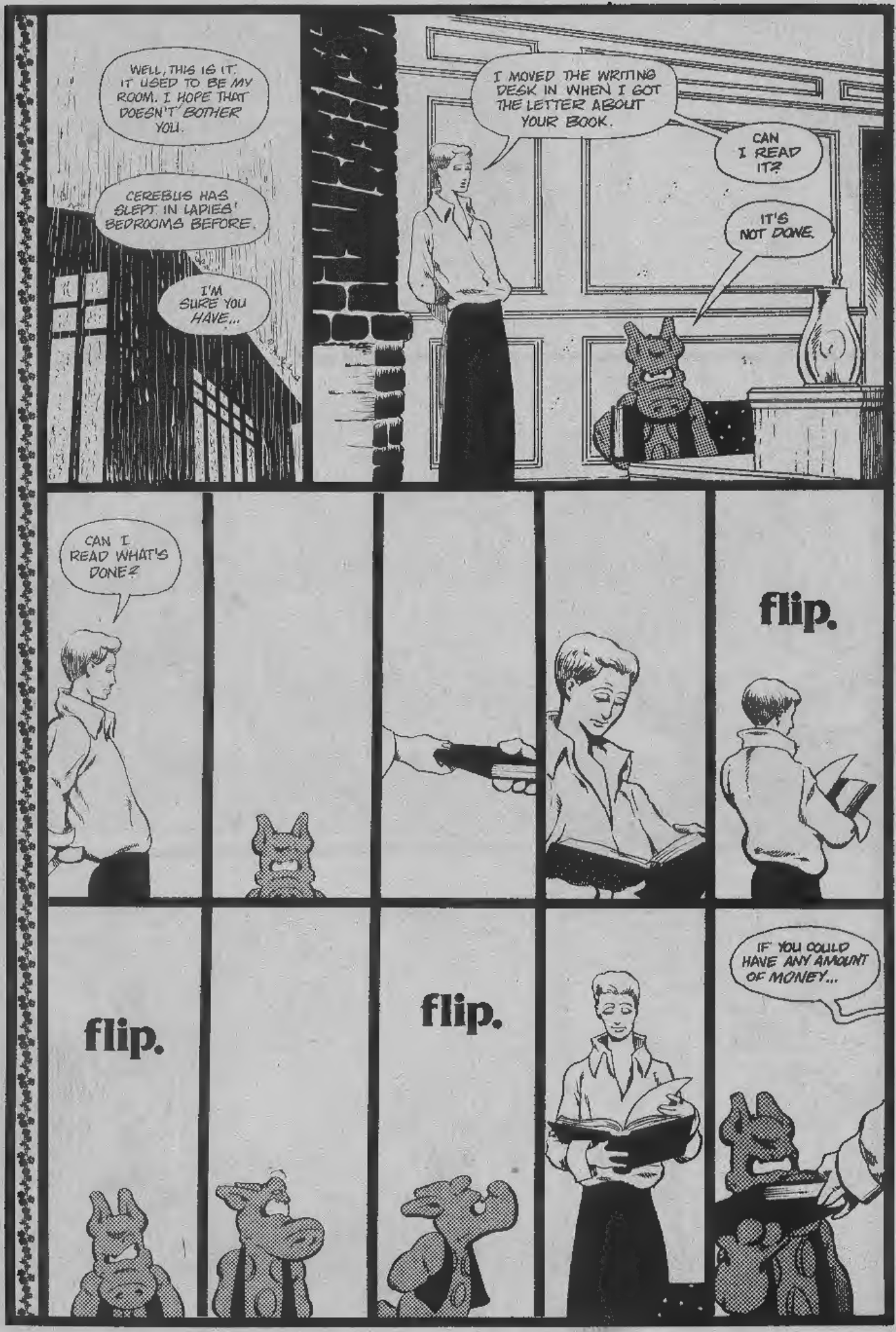
Swords of Cerebus. Volumes 1-5. Cerebus #'s 32, 33, 37, 38, 40, 43, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52 & 53.

CEREBUS THE AARDVARK is published fifteen times a year by Aardvark-Vanaheim Inc., P.O. Box 1674 Station 'C', Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2, including three "Swords of Cerebus" in winter, spring and fall. All contents © 1983 Dave Sim. Any inquiries regarding use of the characters, images, or situations depicted should be addressed to Deni Sim. No unauthorized reproduction allowed except for review or other Journalistic purpose. Advertising rates furnished on request. Printed in Canada by Preney Print and Litho Inc., Windsor, Ontario.

CEREBUS in THE COUNTESS & THE AARDVARK

YES?
GOOD EVENING, MISS. PLEASE INFORM THE COUNTESS THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAS ARRIVED.
SURE... AND PLEASE TELL THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THE COUNTESS ANSWERS THE DOOR HERSELF...
YES, YOUR LADY-SHIP... FORGIVE MY IGNORANCE.

CEREBUS WOULD LIKE TO APOLOGIZE FOR THE STUPID CARRIAGE DRIVER.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO APOLOGIZE...
SO WHERE'S YOUR LUGGAGE?
CEREBUS DOESN'T HAVE ANY LUGGAGE.
JUST HIS SWORD AND HIS BOOK.
I WAS JUST GOING TO MAKE MYSELF A DRINK...
YOU WANT ONE?
AYE.
WHISKEY.
ANYTHING WITH IT?
AYE. A BIG GLASS.
MM.
HOW MANY SERVANTS HAVE YOU GOT?
NONE.
I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE YOU'LL BE STAYING.
CEREBUS USED TO HAVE TWENTY-FIVE PERSONAL SERVANTS.
WHEN HE WAS PRIME MINISTER.


WELL, THIS IS IT. IT USED TO BE MY ROOM. I HOPE THAT DOESN'T BOTHER YOU.
CEREBUS HAS SLEPT IN LADIES' BEDROOMS BEFORE.
I'M SURE YOU HAVE...
I MOVED THE WRITING DESK IN WHEN I GOT THE LETTER ABOUT YOUR BOOK.
CAN I READ IT?
IT'S NOT DONE.
CAN I READ WHAT'S DONE?
flip.
flip.
flip.
IF YOU COULD HAVE ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY...

ANY AMOUNT OF MONEY AT ALL...
HOW MUCH WOULD YOU WANT?
ALL OF IT.
NO--I MEAN WHAT AMOUNT?
ALL OF IT--WHATEVER YOU HAD.
OKAY. SAY IT WASN'T ME. SAY IT WAS LORD JULIUS... HOW MUCH WOULD YOU WANT THEN?
ALL OF IT.
MAYBE WE SHOULD TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE...
WHAT DID YOU THINK OF CEREBUS' BOOK?
IT'S OKAY...
I LIKED THE PART ABOUT THE BUTLER, HAVE YOU WRITTEN ANY MORE?
NO. CEREBUS JUST STARTED.
IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR?
HUH?
TO WRITE. IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE HERE FOR?
CEREBUS USUALLY WRITES IN BARS.
MONEY?

YOU ALREADY GAVE CEREBUS MONEY...
YOU SENT CEREBUS THREE HUNDRED CROWNS.
THEN WHY ARE YOU HERE?
YOU SENT CEREBUS THREE HUNDRED CROWNS.
YOU'RE KIDDING.
ABOUT WHAT?
YOU'RE NOT KIDDING.
I THINK THIS MIGHT BE A GOOD TIME FOR A DRINK.
ANYTIME'S A GOOD TIME FOR A DRINK.

SO -- ASTORIA.
IS SHE A CIRINIST OR A KEVILLIST...?
WHICH ARE YOU?
I'M NOT TELLING.
WHAT ABOUT HER...?
SHE NEVER SAID ANYTHING TO CEREBUS ABOUT IT... IS IT A SECRET?
SEEMS TO BE...
WHAT DO YOU THINK WEISSHAUPT IS?
WEISSHAUPT IS WEALTHY. MOST WEALTHY PEOPLE ARE WEALTHY PEOPLE FIRST AND WHATEVER ELSE THEY ARE SECOND.
YOU SHOULD PUT THAT IN YOUR BOOK.
ARE YOU WEALTHY?
NO. ARE YOU?
THE COUNT IS ...UH...?
VERY. THE COUNT LEFT ME WELL CARED FOR.
IN THE PAST TENSE? YES.

YOU SHOULD WRITE ABOUT WHAT IT WAS LIKE BEING PART OF LORD JULIUS' INNER CIRCLE...
WHY?
BECAUSE EVERYONE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT HIM... WANTS TO HEAR WHAT HE'S LIKE...
HE'S A LOT LIKE A BOTTOMLESS PIT YOU HAVE TO KEEP THROWING MONEY INTO...
NO-- I MEAN, WHAT DOES HE EAT? DOES HE HAVE A GIRL FRIEND? WHAT ARE HIS PROBLEMS?
WHAT SORT OF PROBLEMS HAVE YOU GOT?
ME?
SLAM
COUN'ESS?! IT'S ME -- VICHY DUPRIS..
YER ARDENT ADMIRER 'N' TH' ORN'RIEST ONLIU ANARCHIO-ROMANTICKLE WHO EVER DANGLED A PARTY-SIPPLE...
AN' AH GOT A COMPLAINT!

VICKY -- THIS IS MY FRIEND, CEREBELLS...
PLEASED TUH MAKE YER ACQUAINTANCE, Y'LONG EAR'D, BACK-STABBIN' JIGGALOO...
FARST Y'SAY YUH'LL MARRY UP WITH ME! ...THEN Y'SAY YER NOT SURE!
SO Y'ASK ME TUH MOVE IN WITH YUH ...SO AH TELL MUH PAW AN' HE DISOWNS ME ON THE SPOT...!
THEN YUH SAY Y'CAIN'T MARRY ME 'CAUSE AHM PORE AN YUH CAIN'T TELL IF'N AHM MARRYIN' YUH FER YER MONEY 'R NOT...!
SO YUH GIVE ME A CHECK AN' TELL ME TUH FIND AN APARTYMENT TUH RENT SO'S AH C'N START OVER!!
THEN YUH DECIDES YUH CAIN'T HUMILIATE ME WITH CHARITY, SO YUH STOP PAYMENT ON TH' CHECK
BUT YUH NEEGLECT T'INFORM ME AN' TH' NEXT THANG AH KNOW -- AHM UNDER ARREST FER TRYIN' TUH PASS A BAD CHECK ...
SO YUH BAIL ME OUT BY TELLIN 'EM AHM YER IDIOT COUSIN AN' AH DON'T KNOW WRONG FROM RIGHT...
SO THEN THEY DECIDE TUH HOLD A COMPA-TENSY HEARIN' TUH DETERMINE IF'N AH SHOULD BE WALKIN' AROUND LOOSE...

AN' WHEN AH FAIL IT...!
DO YOU TELL 'EM IT'S ALL A JOKE - AN' AHM REALLY YER FEE-YANCY?
...
DO YOU TELL 'EM AHM THE CHIEF COLLECTION AGENT FER TH' SEPRANIAN PORT AUTHORITY?
NO! YOU STAND THERE GIGGLIN' AS IF IT'S SUM KINDA DAMN JOKE!
AH SPENT THREE WEEKS BEIN' OBSERVED 'N' PRODDED 'N' PINCHED 'N' POKED...
AN' AH KEPT TELLIN' 'EM "AH CAIN'T BE CRAZY"
"AH WORK FER TH' GOVERMUNT!"
IN THE FIRST PLACE, I AM NOT YOUR FRANCEE... IN THE SECOND PLACE, I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH.
HANG ON! I AIN'T EVEN GOT TO THE PART WHARE I HAVE TUH WALK FIVE MILES IN A RAINY STORM!

"On Governing"

by

Former Prime Minister

Cerebus of

Iest

PART the Third

1 Lord Julius

The first day that Cerebus was in Palnu, Lord Julius was meeting with the head of Parmax's taxation department. The guy wanted to know what rate of tax was going to be charged property-owners that year. Lord Julius asked Cerebus to pick a number between one and twenty. I said seventeen. So he turns and tells the guy that it will be seventeen per cent. That pretty well sums up the kind of leader that Lord Julius is. Another time someone came and told him that the clean-up crews in the Trade Building were over staffed and half of them were lying around with nothing to do. So Lord Julius orders twenty gallons of paint from the supply room and has it sent to the lobby. If you have ever seen the lobby of the trade building, it is HUGE!! He calls in the Trade Building guards and tells them to cover the lobby with this paint, see? (Which is a sort of greenish-yellow colour). Here are these Trade Building guards spraying paint all over the marble columns and the inlaid floor. They must have thrown paint around for an hour and a half -- no kidding. Finally Lord Julius tells them to stop and leaves instructions that the paint is to be allowed to dry overnight and then the clean-up crew is to be given one day to clean it up or half of them would be fired. When they got it all done in time, he decided that they were over staffed and fired half of them anyway. When people ask Cerebus what Lord Julius is like, this is what Cerebus thinks of. He's not very tall, but everyone does what ever he says right away. Except Cerebus. Cerebus used to ask why all the time, until Lord Julius would get tired of explaining and then he would go and ask someone else to do it.

Cerebus helped to stop a revolution by the "Eye in the Pyramid," but the more Cerebus thinks about it, the more it seems that Lord Julius probably planned the whole revolution himself.

He also has a painted-on moustache instead of a real one.

LOOKS LIKE THE RAIN'S LETTING UP...
DO YOU REALLY THINK LORD JULIUS' SON CAN GET ME A DEFERRAL ON MY TAXES? ...
NO BUT CEREBUS CAN
REALLY? HOW...?
TAKE SOME
BUT CEREBUS CAN GET IT
HOW MUCH "GREASE" ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?
A FEW HUNDRED
MAYBE A THOUSAND AT THE MOST
THAT'S PRETTY GOOD.
THAT'S NOT BAD AT ALL.
I'VE ALREADY SENT FIVE HUNDRED TO THE TRADE BUILDING FOR A DIRECTORY OF TAX OFFICIALS...
AND I STILL HAVEN'T SEEN IT...
WHY WON'T YOU TELL CEREBUS WHETHER YOU'RE A CIRINIST OR A KEVILLIST?

I GUESS BECAUSE I'M NOT REALLY SURE MYSELF..
I MEAN, I'VE READ "THE NEW MATRIARCHY" AND ALL OF THE PAMPHLETS ...
JUST READING THE HISTORICAL MATERIAL, WITHOUT CIRIN'S COMMENTARY, IT DOESN'T SAY VERY MUCH ABOUT CHILD-BIRTH..
I MEAN, I WANT TO - SOMEDAY, IF I GET MARRIED AGAIN..
BUT THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE THAT I WON'T GET MARRIED...
SO WHAT POSSIBLE GOOD WOULD IT DO ME IF NEW SEPRA HAD A CIRINIST-LED GOVERNMENT? RIGHT?
UH..
I'VE INTERRUPTED YOUR WRITING.. BESIDES WHICH, I REALLY SHOULD GET SOME SLEEP..
GOOD NIGHT..
WHY IS IT THAT EVERY TIME CEREBUS FINALLY GETS A STRAIGHT ANSWER FROM SOMEONE, IT ONLY MAKES HIM MORE CONFUSED ...

COUNTESS?
SHE'S OUT YONDER ON TH' PATTY-OO, Y' FLEA-BIT INTERLOPER, AN' IF'N Y'WANT EGGS, THAT'S TOO BAD, 'COZ SHE MADE TH' LAST OF 'EM FER ME!
HAW HAW HAW
YOUR SLIP IS SHOWING
AHM ONLY W'ARIN' THIS 'TIL MUH CLOTHES IS DRY!
THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL SAY
WELL, WELL.. LOOK WHO FINALLY WOKE UP
SORRY- CEREBUS DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE IN YOUR UNDERWEAR
IT'S A SUN DRESS, IDIOT

HOW LONG DO YOU PLAN TO STAY IN NEW SEPRA?
WHY?
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO MEET SOME PEOPLE...
CIRINISTS OR KEVILLISTS?
EITHER OR REPUBLICANS, CHURCH OFFICIALS, ANARCHO-ROMANTICS, ILLUSIONISTS, SEPRAN EMPIRE LOYALISTS, LOCAL INDIGNITARIES..
LOCAL WHAT?
NOTHING - JUST A SMALL JOKE..
OH
WHO DO YOU THINK CEREBUS SHOULD MEET?
PEOPLE WHO TAKE MY ADVICE USUALLY REGRET IT, SO I DON'T GIVE IT ANY MORE..

HOW SOON CAN WE START "GREASING THE WHEELS"?
TOMORROW IF YOU LIKE.
JUST GET CEREBUS A COURIER'S POUCH AND A THOUSAND CROWNS IN CASH...
CEREBUS CAN TAKE IT TO THE PALNAN EMBASSY..
THEN WHAT?
THEN YOU TEAR UP YOUR TAX BILL...
YOU'RE KIDDING! I PAID MORE THAN FIVE TIMES THAT MUCH LAST YEAR..
AND THEY KEPT ASKING FOR MORE ...
AYE.
DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THIS MEANS?
AYE..
IT MEANS YOU WON'T HAVE TO WALK AROUND IN YOUR UNDERWEAR ANYMORE ..
IDIOT!
SPLASH

I'M S KOFF
SORRY KOFF
I- KOFF
KOFF
IT'S OKAY - YOU DIDN'T KNOW--
DON'T FOLLOW SO CLOSELY
BREATHE THROUGH YOUR MOUTH...
TURN YOUR HEAD...
WHERE DO YOU KEEP THE TOWELS?
...
Cerebus found out as Prime Minister that you can't trust anyone -- This is why you should never listen to any advice anyone gives you and have your advisors executed from time to time as a warning to all of the traitors around you to think twice about causing trouble...
But, as leader, you should never forget those who are loyal to you. You should hold parties for them regularly and have lots of whiskey (free) for them. That way they get drunk and reveal themselves as the disloyal vermin they all are in reality.
FINISHED?
NO CEREBUS JUST CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING ELSE TO WRITE

DO YOU EVER THINK ABOUT... SETTLING DOWN SOMEWHERE?
YOU MEAN GETTING MARRIED?
CEREBUS LIVED WITH A GIRL FOR A WHILE
WHEN CEREBUS WAS EIGHTEEN...
HOW OLD WAS SHE?
NOT OLD ENOUGH TO GET MARRIED...

WOULD YOU HAVE MARRIED HER IF SHE HAD BEEN OLD ENOUGH?
PROBABLY.
CEREBUS PROBABLY WOULD'VE REGRETTED IT TOO!
SHE WAS SPOILED ROTTEN ..
SHE WOULD HIDE THE COLLECTION BAG TO MAKE CEREBUS STAY HOME
SHE BOUGHT A SILK BALL GOWN ONCE AND TOLD THE MERCHANT THAT HER BOY-FRIEND WAS A TAX COLLECTOR, SO HE HAD LOTS OF MONEY TO PAY FOR IT..
SHE WAS CRAZY ..
.. BUT SHE WAS NEVER DULL...

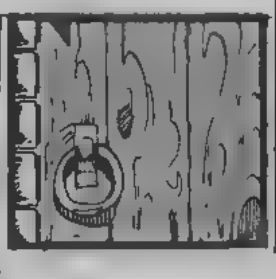
SO WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO HER?
WE...
CRASH
WHAT ON EARTH WAS...
COUNTESS! BE CAREFUL -- IT COULD BE...
UNCLE ARTEMIS
UNCLE...?
OH NO
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING?

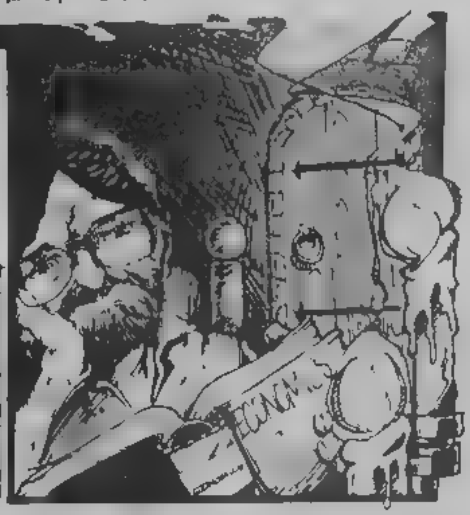
I'VE BEEN BEATEN! I'VE BEEN BROKEN! BUT NOW -- I'M FIGHTING BACK!!
WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
UNCLE ARTEMIS
HARROWING ADVENTURES! RAZOR'S-EDGE EXPLOITS! - MAYHEM THE WAY YOU LIKE IT!!
NEXT! YOU DARE NOT MISS
THE SECRET ORIGIN OF WOLVEROACH! PART ONE OF A THREE-PART MINI-SERIES
CEREBUS! HELP ME GET HIM UPSTAIRS!

HELLO, I'M ORSON WELLES WELCOME TO POETRY CORNER WHERE WE READ NO LINE BEFORE ITS RHYME POETRY IS WRITTEN FOR MANY REASONS - UNBURDENING, SHARING, A NEED TO COMMUNICATE - TONIGHT'S SELECTION WAS WRITTEN HOWEVER, FOR THE MOST HONEST REASON OF ALL FOR THE MONEY WITH THAT IN MIND LET US SIT BACK AND ENJOY TONIGHT'S SELECTION

"QUOTH THE REAGAN, NEVERMORE..."

Once upon a midnight dreary, as I pondered weak and weary
over many confusing volumes of economic lore
Tales of supply-side economics spun about my head like comets
when there came a quiet rapping, rapping at my chamber door
"'Tis some salesman," I muttered "With his baskets full of
merchandising gore,"
Only this and nothing more





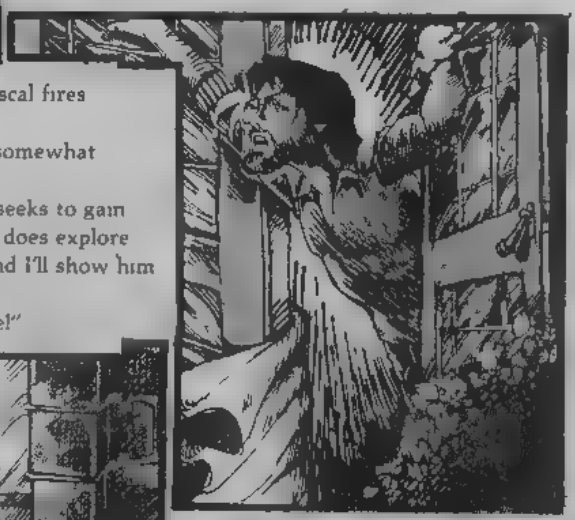
No, I have not forgotten, 'twas the days of Christmas
shopping
And the dollar's value still was dropping, while inflation's
wings did soar-
As the day became tomorrow, I recalled attempts
to borrow
Golden coin to ease my sorrow, sorrow born in
Elenore
For the fair and radiant maiden, wife of Franklin,
Elenore-
Nameless here, forevermore
And the meteoric sad descent of each single,
hard-earned cent
Which barely gotten, must be spent I'd never known
such states before!
So that now to still the crying of my purse, I stood denying,
"Come back when I get paid, and leave the shadow of my door!"
"Come back when I get paid, and leave the shadow of my
door "
Just do this and nothing more

Presently, my soul grew stronger, hesitating then
no longer
"Sir," said I, "Or madam, your forgiveness I implore
But the fact is, I was grieving over economic blows
we've been receiving
That I was given to believing that you were naught
but retail whore
And I almost called the cops." Here I opened wide
the door
Darkness there, and nothing more

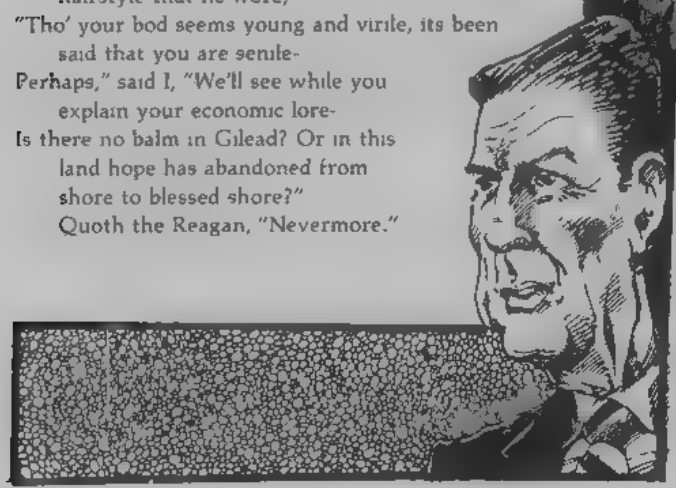
c·1983 DON GOODRUM

Deep indeed did dark portrude - and I considered taking'ludes
Dreaming dreams of spending sprees no mortal dared to dream before;
But the silence was impaling, my sweepstakes ticket needed mailing
Publisher's Clearinghouse was wailing, yet all I heard was "Elenore"
And I called her, New Deal's daughter, and in the echo came the name of "Elenore"
Merely this and nothing more

Back into the chamber turning, fiscal fires within me burning
Soon again I heard that tapping, somewhat louder than before
"Surely," said I, "some neighbor, seeks to gain my favor, and at my window does explore
Let my heart be still a moment and I'll show him what for.
'Tis a neighbor, nothing more!"



Then did I throw out the shutter, in the street and to the gutter
And in stepped an aged actor of those Metro-Goldwyn days of yore
Looking like one who'd been warred on, or who'd taken too much darvon
With, an air of presidential pardon, he leaned against by chamber door
Arm perched on bust of Nixon, just beyond my chamber door
Perched and stared and nothing more
Then this aged man beguiling my sad fancy into smiling by the tidal wave decorum of the hairstyle that he wore,
"Tho' your bod seems young and virile, its been said that you are senile-
Perhaps," said I, "We'll see while you explain your economic lore-
Is there no balm in Gilead? Or in this land hope has abandoned from shore to blessed shore?"
Quoth the Reagan, "Nevermore."

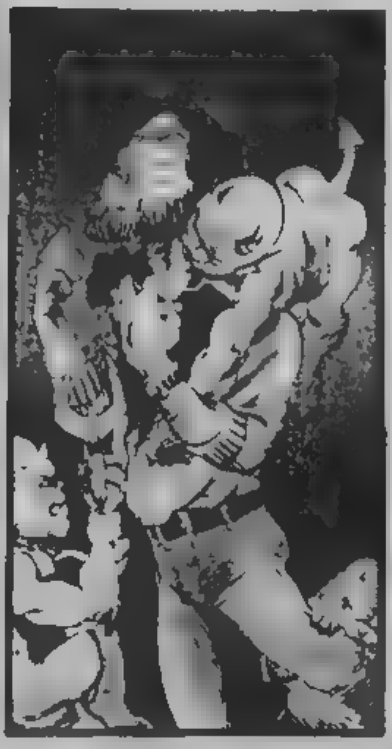


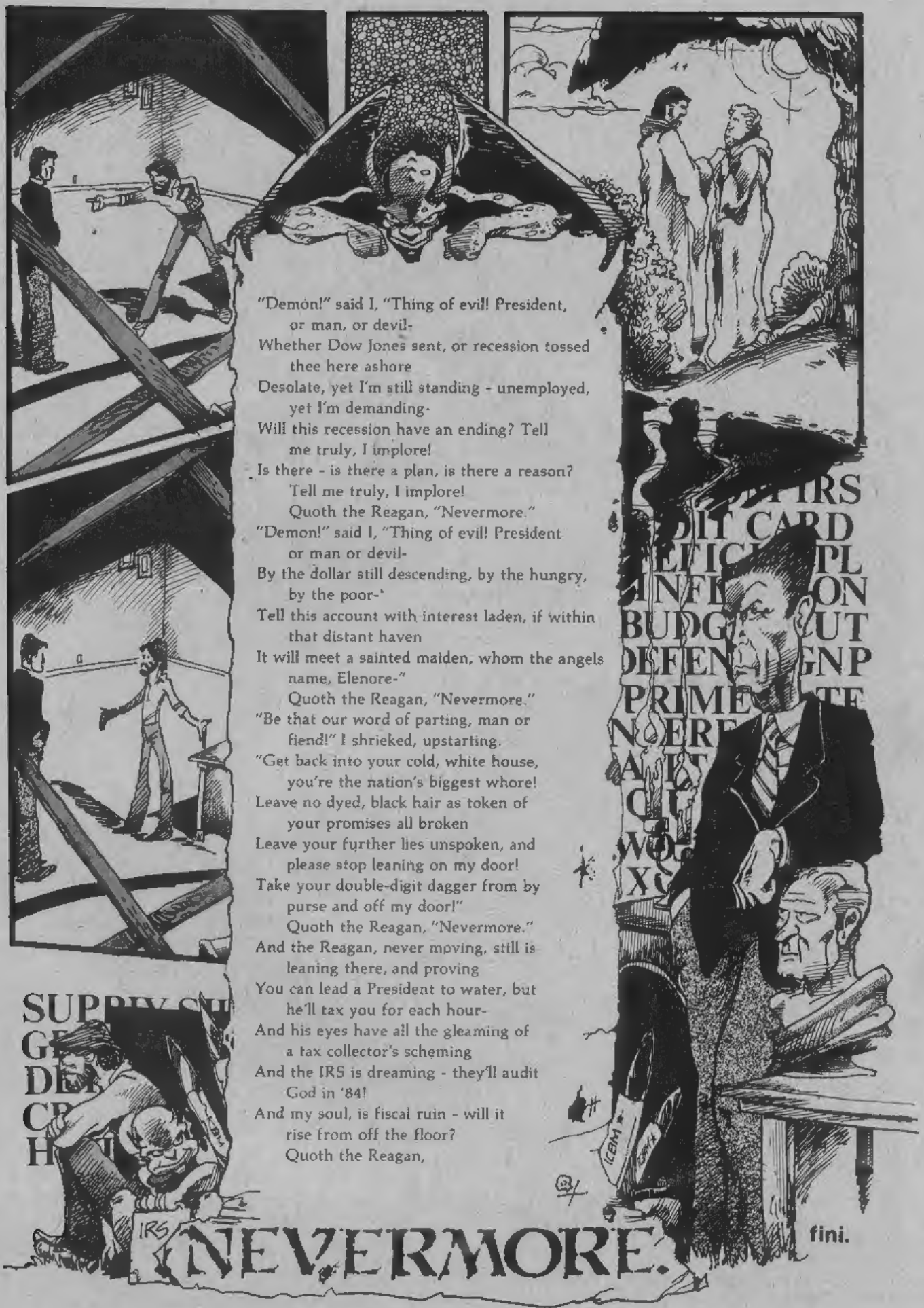
Much I marvelled this politico to speak the truth so plainly
Tho' his answer little meaning, little optimism bore,
For we cannot help agreeing, no political human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing "Two plus two does equal four-"
Yet idiot or genius, his speech was still the cleanest-
He spoke the truth 'gainst my chamber door
Hope will live here, Nevermore

Startled by this man I'd trusted, to find my
hopes and dreams so busted,
"I'm sure," said I, "What you utter is senility
no more
Quoting some foul chapter of economical disaster,
of budget cuts and spending gluts, trampling
welfare to the floor
'Til the dirges of faint hope, that melancholy
burden bore
of Never-nevermore
But that Reagan, still beguiling, my sad fancy
with his smiling
Straight I wheeled a velvet cushion 'front of
man and bust and door,
And as my mood continued sinking, I put myself
to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this craven character
of yore,
meant by saying, 'Nevermore"

Thus, I engaged in musing and in
meaningless perusing,
[illegible]
Social Security's no more
What if I asked of Chappaquiddick?
Would
he tell me Teddy did it?
And if he did, then would that rid it of
its tragedy and gore?
But the facts would never fit it What
had he come here for?
I'll press beyond this Nevermore!

Then the air grew strangley dense, as
if angels, burning incense
Had drifted through my window scattering
demons on the floor
"Fiend!" I cried, "Al Haig hath sent thee, by
these demons he besets me
Acid dreams return to rend me, acid dropped
in '64
Is there no angel to defend me, or call
the ghost of Elenore?"
Quoth the Reagan, "Nevermore "




"Demon!" said I, "Thing of evil! President,
or man, or devil-
Whether Dow Jones sent, or recession tossed
thee here ashore
Desolate, yet I'm still standing - unemployed,
yet I'm demanding-
Will this recession have an ending? Tell
me truly, I implore!
Is there - is there a plan, is there a reason?
Tell me truly, I implore!
Quoth the Reagan, "Nevermore."
"Demon!" said I, "Thing of evil! President
or man or devil-
By the dollar still descending, by the hungry,
by the poor-'
Tell this account with interest laden, if within
that distant haven
It will meet a sainted maiden, whom the angels
name, Elenore-"
Quoth the Reagan, "Nevermore."
"Be that our word of parting, man or
fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting.
"Get back into your cold, white house,
you're the nation's biggest whore!
Leave no dyed, black hair as token of
your promises all broken
Leave your further lies unspoken, and
please stop leaning on my door!
Take your double-digit dagger from by
purse and off my door!"
Quoth the Reagan, "Nevermore."
And the Reagan, never moving, still is
leaning there, and proving
You can lead a President to water, but
he'll tax you for each hour-
And his eyes have all the gleaming of
a tax collector's scheming
And the IRS is dreaming - they'll audit
God in '84!
And my soul, is fiscal ruin - will it
rise from off the floor?
Quoth the Reagan,
IRS
ICBM
NEVERMORE.
fini.

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

I would have to agree with everyone who wrote about the conclusion to "High Society" that it was, in many ways, unsatisfying. I would not go so far (as one correspondent did) as to say that it didn't make any sense at all, or rather, that too many elements were introduced out of nowhere without rhyme or reason. As you can see from the first few post "High Society" issues, the story goes on. Cerebus was a front man for Astoria's plans and schemes and consequently was often surprised by what went on (and what didn't). I hope the "On Governing" excerpts will help to clarify how much Cerebus was kept in the dark. Future issues will also deal with outside viewpoints of what happened in lest over the winter of 1413-1414....viewpoints which I suspect will surprise more than a few readers.

Many of the letter-writers took the issue with the portrayal of idealism in the concluding chapters. I was attempting to address the fact that idealism exists in myriad forms and gradations. Cerebus' assertion "Cerebus thought he could... make a difference," seems to have lodged uncomfortably in more than a few fannish craws. The fact remains that he did think that way. Note the pause in the phrase. He begins "Cerebus thought he could...." It was my thought that he would have continued on to say "...conquer the whole continent" or "... establish an empire that would last a thousand years." In the context of the moment, this struck him as more than a little ridiculous so he modifies it to something a little less depressing and ends up admitting what he was really trying to do (what, I would venture to guess, every would-be Alexander, feels in his heart of hearts).... he wanted to be the instigator of change.

I was not trying to portray idealism as heroic -- quite the contrary. As much as I feel a great stirring inside when I think of Kennedy's Thousand Days or Lech Walesa and his Blows Against the Empire, neither, I suspect, has any basis in reality. Or very little. Allen Varney's assertion that most of "High Society" cast was "motivated by greed and guided by relentless cynicism" strikes me as a charge levelled by (dare I say it?) a closet idealist. Of course they were! What do you suppose keeps the world going? There are people who want to set the course for world events, but there are more people who want to tear off a little piece when and where they can find it. Period. Astoria's motivation (which she dealt with briefly and defensively in #50 since the idealism of it conflicted with her carefully cultivated veneer of cynicism) was to get women the right to vote. To her, the way you do that is to change the election rules so that any male over a certain age can vote. If she could make that work, she would have a good chance, over a period of years to introduce limited voting for females. The unforseen effect of this among the aristocracy (still a visible group in lest, unlike Palnu or Beduin) was a wholehearted endorsement. Particularly among the young members of the upper classes who sensed the wheels of (no pun intended) revolution by about one hundred and eighty degrees ("By the time I got to Woodstock we were half a million strong"). These are the Anarcho-Romantics. Not only should everyone be able to vote, but we should persuade all our fathers to give all their money to the poor people, so they can have reflecting pools and sweet-meats and apricot brandy. Wrong-headed idealism? Probably. Naive? No question. But the fuzzy-brained improbability of it all leads Suenteus Po to write his books on the 1413 election and Cerebus' term as Prime Minister and a growing awareness that the goal of any great civilization is (or should be) the freedom of its people from tyranny. Many readers made the mistake of thinking that the last page of #50 was intended to show Suenteus Po as a paragon of virtue - or something. Not at all. Not at all. He was showing youthful rebellion in full flower. Tilting at windmills even as his movement falls into ruins, knowing he was right and the rest of the world was wrong. He switched father-figures that was all. From his own aristocratic pater to the rabble-rousing "Power to the people" Prime Minister.

But to return to the beginning of this note, I would ask that you look on "High Society" as the novel within the novel. I apologize for all the loose ends that were not tied up, but I also ask that you bear with me on that as I forge ahead. And please remember that all of the characters in the book have their own idea of what happened and why.

Take all their words (and mine) with a substantial grain of salt.

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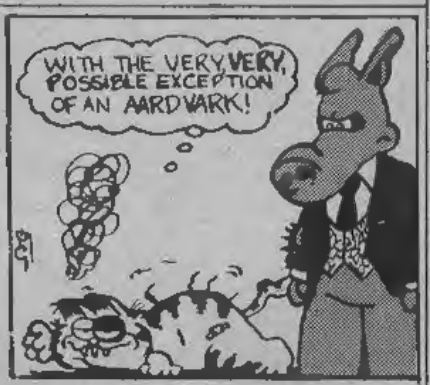
Dear Dave and Deni,

Let me start off by saying that I'd like to apologize for my letter that was published in #51.

Now, I'll have to be careful about how I explain myself, since I don't want this



Submitted by Steven J. Getman of Ovid, N.Y.

A free copy of the next Swords to the first person who identifies all of the people in this photo. Three hints: It's at Aardvarks, Albinos and Aliens in Weedsport, N.Y., Ken Hahn is second from the left. The guy who is fourth from the left is not O.J. Simpson.

letter to seem to be something it's not. (In life, and in letters, I've learned that sometimes you may only make the situation worse by trying to set things straight, by trying to explain yourself, instead of just letting matters rest. Nevertheless, I'll give it a go). This letter *is* a sincere apology. This letter is *not* an attempt to weasel out of responsibility for what my last letter said.

In my defence, I'll say that it became quite clear to me, upon actually seeing my letter in the lettercol, that the word "sop" (and, to some extent, the word "pacify" also) did not accurately reflect the concept I had in mind when I wrote it. But that's as far as my "defence" goes. I was trying to express my concept in a few words, but I failed miserably and, what's more, I didn't correct that failure. I won't go into the "concept" because I think that might appear to be weaseling.

However, the letter *did* go out from me exactly as it was printed in the lettercol and I obviously must take full responsibility for it. All I'm saying is that it was due more to carelessness or laziness or call-it-what-you-will than by anything else. Certainly, I did *not* mean to impugn your artistic integrity. For giving that impression I sincerely apologize, in particular. If anything is clear (or, at least, *should* have been clear in my mind) from your work and your comments about your work it is that you do what *you* feel is best, as an artistic decision -- trusting to the quality of the work to sell the product. Your reaction to my letter was thus entirely justified (and very direct!).

To me, comics are ultimately largely "just" a hobby, a pleasant (and hopefully sometimes enlightening) diversion. I guess I sometimes emotionally lose sight of the fact that to you pros, comics are your *job* and, to a large extent your life. Thus, careless or thoughtless or imprecise or ill-considered comments are sometimes tossed off by me that may seem to be of little import to the context of a hobby, but are of great import in the context of a job, or a life. This, of course, is my problem. I must strive to keep things in perspective (without of course becoming totally and deadly serious *all* the time).

I hope this letter has served its purpose. I try to be mature (human? resiliant? balanced?) enough to accept my lumps when I deserve them, as I do here. But I guess I'm also sensitive enough (and concerned enough) to try to show that my comments in this case were not maliciously motivated.

Otherwise, #51 was a very enjoyable issue. My first thought when I saw the word "closet" was what an odd choice of terms it was for the situation. My second thought (hope) was that maybe this was to be the "Cerebus/Lord Julius/Elrod in a closet" sequence that was hinted at many months ago. Happily, this latter thought turned out to be true -- even if you did (literally) throw other "extra" characters into the closet. The contrast to the High Society issues was stark. Here we had the knee-slapping-guffaw-type of humour, whereas I found most of the humourous parts of HS to be more subtle and rueful. I mean, I like endless political machinations as much as the next fellow (I watched the entire final day of the Progressive Conservative leadership convention of TV! -- or does that make me a kind of political masochist?), but "straight-forward" funny stuff has its place, too. (And, come to think of it, funny stuff has its place in endless political machjnations as well -- at least it seeemed so at the PC convention). It will be interesting to see if the difference in tone in this issue is a change of direction or just a change of pace.

"T.M. Maple"
#1222, Toronto, Ontario

I would like to apologize, as well, for lashing out as sharply as I did. I would like to make the Aardvark Comment pages a place where we can have some fun and answer a few questions. It was for that reason that I decided early on not to answer the letters as a faceless

editorial-type type. But that does bring with it the responsibility on all our parts to remain civil and watch our phrasing much as we do in every day conversation. My theory is; if you wouldn't say something to someone face-to-face, you shouldn't say it in a letter. Hope to hear from you again, soon.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave and Deni,

I just saw "Return of the Jedi". Did you get the feeling that the script-writers had read Cerebus #21. I think you should sue.

Incidently, issue 50 was great. The back-up story was good too. Although I was never a Beatles fan, myself, I was still moved by Valentino's story.

One other thing: One of the things that makes Cerebus so interesting is your innovative use of panel arrangement. Nevertheless, I think you over-did it in issue #49. I felt like a real idiot turning the magazine around and around while I was trying to read it at a bus station.

Louis Blair
544 S. Broadway, Rm 220
Menomonie, WI., 54751

I haven't seen "Return of the Jedi" yet, but I trust you so much, we have initiated a lawsuit for 3.2 million dollars against Lucasfilms and its agents. You better be right about this, Louis.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave,

Just finished the Animated Cerebus.
Fnork, splat!!!
How could you forget that standard line of the neighborhood pub... "Easy, it was all on one string"
So much for the forgotten punchline of A Well Stocked Bar.

The folio itself was great, and one of the few remaining examples of what *was* known as value for the money. My only question is: "How do you get the thing framed and presented for less than a half grand?"

But enough money worries, do more of these. They give you the luxury of space to work on minor nuances (yes, he does look good in a turtleneck), and things like detailed progressions (P.S., I loved pgs. 16, 17 of #18 more of that pacing).

Good yocks.

Peter C. Green
2526 W. 14th Ave.,
Vancouver, BC.

The other version of the joke I got was that the bet only involved taking a sip. And the last guy drinks the whole thing. And someone says "How could you do that?" And he says "You know how it is with that stuff. Once you get started it all comes out".

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Deni & Dave:

Cerebus #50 completely redeems the depressing #49, especially given #50's stunning ending. The very best comedy finds its basis in the depth and seriousness of its themes, as "High Society," viewed in its entirety, demonstrates. Whether the aardvark is a warrior, a politician, or something else entirely -- say, a popular musician -- he is a hero. And when a hero's dreams are shattered, we all cry -- then move on to the next adventure in life.

As for your own and Cerebus' futures, please follow your own dreams, and don't let the small-minded hollow people pull you down.

Best regards,

Robert D. Lutz
9933 Alliance Rd.,
Cincinnati, OHIO 45242

Sounds like a George Romero film "Attack of the Small-Minded Hollow People".

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dave:

....Issue #51, page 3, bottom left hand panel ("I feel closer to that goat then I did to your mother...")... are you *implying* no, I mean are you *inferring*....oh the hell with it... Are you saying Lord Julius is Cerebus' *FATHER!?!?!?!?!?*

Lillian Wachbroit
9517 Washington Ave.,
Laurel, MD., 20707

You wouldn't last five minutes in Lord Julius' cabinet. You take what he says seriously. Which is a serious mistake.

Dear Cer:

Having applied myself to applying some Vitalis --- many thanks for the suggestion --- I can now begin writing my first fan letter to you. Wilcox and his ilk (if I may use that work in front of Deni) make this look so easy, but I must be careful to phrase my properly thoughts in letter this.

Not wishing to offend, let's get down to brass tact: this series is so....uh....I mean really, your writing is....uh....Darn it, I can't think with everyone staring at me.

This is going to be harder than I thought.

Sheepishly,

David Allen
Olney Central College
5 Douglas Drive,
Olney, IL., 62450

David! David! It's okay. Class? Turn around and face the other way. We don't want to make David nervous. He has a letter to read. Won't that be nice? Back to you, David.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Dear Dave,

Just got Cerebus #50. Read it.

Now *that* ending was worth waiting two years for. All it needed was background music for the last page-and-a-half. And the sequence with the Elf on pages 15-17 just might beat the last page of #36 for the title of Most Moving Scene In This Book. A real choker-upper there, Dave.

After I catch my breath, a more detailed review of "High Society" should follow (if I can find a zine to run it...).

Great job.

Paul Balze
115 Crest Avenue,
Glen Burnie, Md., 21061

AARDVARK RIDDLES

Submitted by Sierra Loubert of Orifino, Idahoho (because she's our niece -- Deni's sister's daughter, that is).

Which Aardvark holds the speed record?
The near sighted Aardvark who wrapped his tongue around a motorcycle.

What did the Aardvark say when he lost the race to the ant?
If you can't beat 'em, eat 'em.

How do ants hide from Aardvarks?
They disguise themselves as uncles.

What does an Aardvark use when he has a cold?
An antihistamine.